

**Testimony of Adam Schutzman –**

**SB574**

**Judicial Proceedings Committee**

**Support**

I want to thank Chairman Smith and members of the committee for taking the time to hear all of us testify today. My name is Adam Schutzman and I am the Program Manager for the Bail Diversion program at The Work First Foundation. With the mission of lifting people out of poverty through employment, the Work First Foundation sponsors programs that connect underserved populations to job opportunities, conducts research on poverty alleviation, and runs a Fellowship Program for young professionals passionate about direct service and public policy. I started at the Work First Foundation as one of those young professionals when the Bail Diversion program was in its early stages and I have had the pleasure and honor to see it grow. Today I want to convey the success of this program and why it would be beneficial to ensure its continuation and expansion.

In February of 2017 bail reform was put into effect in Maryland with the purpose of reducing or eliminating unreasonably high cash bail amounts and promoting the release of defendants on their own recognizance as much as possible. In the city of Baltimore, while the percentage of defendants who receive a cash bail amount has dropped from 35 percent to 14 percent, the percentage of defendants held without bail has increased from 15 percent to 34 percent. It's as if the undue burden of cash bail has simply been replaced with presumptive detention.

This decision has been costly. When behind bars defendants cannot obtain a job, secure childcare, or in many cases maintain their housing situation. A study by the University of Maryland found that of those who could not make bail, 25 percent feared losing their job and 40 percent thought they would lose their home. It's not just the defendants who are paying though. The Justice Policy Institute reported that the Maryland Department of Budget and Management estimated it costs \$100 per day to hold one person in a detention center. In comparison, the cost of pretrial release services comes out to approximately \$2.50 per person per day.

The Work First Foundation's Bail Diversion program has offered a middle course - one that balances accountability with fundamental liberty. As one of the only programs across the nation that utilizes employment and economic empowerment as an alternative to bail, this program is an innovative solution that has successfully cut the cost of jail, helped participants be productive members of society, and increased the chances of favorable trial outcomes. We have seen these results directly. **Fewer than 4 percent of our clients fail to appear in court. Nearly 80% of our defendants receive a positive outcome at their trials with no incarceration or probation.** Judges have responded to defendants' progress in our program and given them a second chance.

More than results in the courtroom though, we are seeing results in young people's lives. Defendants tell us all the time that it is impossible with an open case to find a job because employers are unwilling to take a risk that their trial might have a negative outcome. Still, we have successfully placed more than one third of these defendants into full time employment - employment that lasts beyond their trial dates.

I ask the committee today to support SB574. The Work First Foundation's Bail Diversion program and partnership with the District Court Re-Entry Project has proven to be successful and

would benefit from a sense of security that the program can be funded. I am not exaggerating when I say that this program has the potential to transform the bail and pretrial debacle all across Maryland. Thank you for your time.